

I. INTRODUCTION

This position is located in a local classing office of the Cotton Program. This office is one of a number of classing offices located in major cotton producing areas through which are administered programs on cotton and related commodities provided for in legislative and administrative requirements in connection with standards, marketing services, and allied regulatory responsibilities.

Incumbent's initial responsibilities during the first part of the first year of employment center around those of the Field Representative while receiving training assignments designed to prepare him/her for higher-level responsibilities in the area of classing cotton and other operations in the classing office. The Field Representative's responsibilities include cotton sampling inspections and the collection of cotton market news, and these duties are performed at the classing office and various locations within the office territory. Assignments may be performed in other classing offices, which involve details and/or reassignment to a different geographical area as needed and as determined by management. As the need for Field Representative duties subsides toward the end of the classing season, the incumbent will focus more upon classer training and learning the operation and maintenance of the High Volume Instrument system.

This is a multi-level position description covering the GS-5 and GS-7 grade levels. The attached responsibilities are for the GS-7 target grade. At the GS-5 level, the employee receives closer supervision and is acquiring the background experience necessary to operate at the full performance level of GS-9.

II. MAJOR DUTIES

This is a trainee position. As such, the duties are designed to orient the employee to the grading of cotton, culminating in the successful completion of the USDA cotton classing exam at approximately the end of the first year of employment as well as to familiarize the employee with the organizational procedures of the Cotton Program. The training process includes both formal instruction and on-the-job training.

A. Inspection of Cotton Sampling

Incumbent learns the importance of proper sampling procedures and discusses inadequacies of sampling with samplers, ginnermen and warehousemen. Incumbent emphasizes to licensed samplers and warehousemen at every opportunity proper procedures and demonstrates the proper sampling procedures when necessary. When incumbent doubts that proper sampling procedures are being followed or feels it is absolutely necessary to spot-check a gin or warehouse where samples are not being drawn at time of inspection, additional samples for appraisal may be drawn from bales to

confirm the proper sampling of cotton awaiting classing. The incumbent takes these additional samples to the classing office for classing and has the class compared with the class that was put on original sample. At gins equipped with mechanical cotton samplers, incumbent checks time elapsed between segments and the number of segments as compared to the weight of the bale to determine that the mechanical samplers are operating properly. The incumbent prepares a cotton sampling report for each visit, discusses sampling irregularities with samplers and plant managers, and where sampling irregularities are found makes on-the-spot corrections of minor infractions and reports others to supervisor for guidance. This involves instructing the sampler, tactfully but firmly, to draw samples using procedures prescribed by the Cotton Program. The incumbent points out that an improperly drawn sample may not represent the actual grade of the cotton accurately.

B. Collects Market News Information

Following specific instructions, the incumbent collects, summarizes and analyzes market information on price, volume, quality and movement of cotton and cottonseed from producer, ginner, merchant, and others. This data shall be included in market news reports.

C. Classification of Cotton

Studies instructional material, the official standards, and related regulations that govern the grading of cotton.

Receives instructions at the work site; works with cotton classers to observe and learn the techniques used and the application of standards in classing cotton.

Assists in preparing reports and performs related duties in the classing office as training permits.

Under close supervision and review, the incumbent will learn that the color grade, leaf grade, and extraneous matter (when present) of cotton samples are determined by examining the samples of cotton and evaluating and comparing the color, leaf content and extraneous matter (leaf, grass, bark, etc.) of each sample established standards and guides in order to arrive at the appropriate grade.

During peak operations, the incumbent may be required to work shift work in order to manage daily workloads.

D. High Volume Instrument Operation

The incumbent will learn to operate the High Volume Instrument (HVI) to assess cotton qualities, including the calibration and minor adjustment procedures for the system. The incumbent will also be trained to assist in routine maintenance of the HVI system.

Performs other duties as assigned.

Factor 1 - Knowledge Required by the Position

Moderate knowledge and skill of the characteristics of cotton and associated products. Knowledge of or familiarity with cotton sampling techniques and procedures requiring extended training or experience to perform the work.

Familiarity with the color (hue, brightness, and chroma), amount of leaf present in each Leaf Grade as represented by the official cotton standards, and recognition of Extraneous Matter levels sufficient for notation. Thorough product knowledge of some but not necessarily all the characteristics or specifications of the cotton product.

The ability to develop skills in determining the color grade, leaf grade, and extraneous matter of cotton samples according to the official standards by visual examination of the sample and comparison to the standard.

The aptitude for acquiring skills in the routine operation and calibration of the High Volume Instrument system, including elementary routine maintenance.

Factor 2 - Supervisory Controls

The work is under the supervision of the Area Director. The Agricultural Commodity Grader uses initiative in performing their recurring assignments with or without specific instructions. Guidance may also be received from a supervisor, senior level grader, or specialist in the classing office ~~in~~ with regard to detailed and specific methods to be used in performing each phase of the work, if necessary.

The work is reviewed for technical accuracy and in compliance with established procedures. Review of the work increases with more difficult assignments if the employee has not previously performed the work.

Factor 3 - Guidelines

Written guidelines include the official grade standards, regulations, visual aids, instructional training material, and other written guidelines provided locally. While the incumbent uses initiative and extensive judgment in their day-to-day activities, he or she is expected to refer the more difficult technical decisions and problems or unusual situations to the supervisor or senior level grader.

Whereas the trainee adheres closely to the guidelines and instructions, clarification, where needed, is given by a supervisor. Inasmuch as guidelines are available, there may be instances where they do not completely apply to the work or a particular situation may have questionable gaps in their application. The employee uses judgment in interpreting and adapting the guidelines for specific cases, situations, or problems. At the trainee level, it is expected that the employee will attempt make an analysis and recommend resolutions whenever possible.

Factor 4 - Complexity

The work involves following methods and procedures which are closely related. Cotton classification requires skill developed through considerable practice and training because of the fine distinctions that must be made based on sight and the frequent occurrence of difficult, borderline situations.

Factor 5 - Scope and Effect

The grader must apply a combination of manual skills, product knowledge, judgment and stamina to consistently produce accurate determinations, which have a direct relationship to the market value of the cotton being graded.

Factor 6 - Personal Contacts

Internal contacts are primarily with other graders and other employees of the classing office where training is conducted. External contacts are primarily with cotton producers, merchants, ginnermen and warehousemen. Responsibilities require skill in meeting and conversing with a broad range of personalities.

Factor 7 - Purpose of Contacts

Contacts with employees of office where headquartered are necessary in the performance of duties. Outside contacts are necessary for the collection of market news and in performing sampling inspections at gins and warehouses. Occasionally the incumbent will be called upon to resolve operating problems with others who are working toward mutual cooperative goals.

Factor 8 - Physical Demands

Work includes moving trays of samples and standing to perform the classification of cotton samples, driving to visit the cotton industry locations where sampling inspections are made and market news information is collected.

Factor 9 - Work Environment

The work environment includes exposure to small amounts of cotton dust.